PROPERTY PLANNING COMMON ELEMENTS

COMPONENTS OF MASTER PLANS

HABITATS AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

Habitat Classifications used in Master Plans

The DNR uses several habitat classification systems when planning and performing management activities. The two that are most relevant to property master planning are natural communities and cover types. Each has a different purpose, function, and scale.

The natural community system is broader and ecologically defined, based on assemblages of plant and animal species that are repeated across the landscape in an observable pattern. Natural communities may be named for their dominant plant species (e.g., pine barrens, sedge meadow), a prominent environmental feature (e.g., dry cliff, Great Lakes dune), or some combination. Occurrences of Wisconsin's natural communities are tracked by Wisconsin's Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) program, part of an international network of inventory programs responsible for maintaining data on status and locations of rare species, natural communities, and other features. The natural community system is particularly useful for identifying interconnected, functional natural elements.

The cover type system is more focused and generally applies at a finer scale. This system breaks out the primary vegetative types on the landscape and classifies them by the dominant vegetation present on a particular site. The cover type system was developed as a forest management tool, used to identify and apply management to different forest types. Specifically, a forest stand is designated as a certain cover type if ≥50% of its tree basal area is dominated by a particular tree species or combination of species. Sites having <10% trees are considered non-forested and are classified as various other habitat types according to the predominant vegetation present. Reconnaissance data collected on these various cover types are stored in the Wisconsin Field Inventory and Reporting System (WisFIRS). WisFIRS originally was used to plan and track management only for forest cover types, but has been expanded to include habitat types where timber production is not the primary management goal.

Because the cover type system focuses on specific vegetation types, it is useful for directing and carrying out vegetation management activities. However, consideration of natural communities along with cover types is essential in planning and management to ensure that the overall integrity and function of managed resources are maintained. **Accordingly, the tiered habitat classification scheme used in master planning integrates both of these systems**. This scheme uses a combination of cover types and natural communities to describe habitats for management purposes. These 'habitat' types are nested under 15 broad habitat categories that are used to depict land cover on master planning maps. In the table below, the bolded terms in the cells are the 15 broad categories. Individual habitat types are listed below them.

	FOREST	SHRUB/SAVANNA	MIX	OPEN

UPLAND	**Upland Broad-leaved Deciduous Forest**
	• Aspen
	• Black Walnut
	• Central Hardwoods
	• Northern Hardwoods
	• Oak
	• Red Maple
	• White Birch
	Upland Coniferous Forest
	• Balsam Fir
	• Hemlock
	• Jack Pine
	• Red Pine
	• White Pine
	• White Spruce
		Oak Opening
		Oak/Pine Barrens
		Oak Woodland
		Upland Shrub
				Cliffs/Outcrops
				Farmland
				Upland Grass
				• Remnant Prairie
				  ○ Dry
				  ○ Dry-mesic
				  ○ Mesic
				  ○ Sand
				• Surrogate Grasslands
				  ○ Planted Prairie/ Warm-season Grass
				  ○ Cool-season Grass
				• Bracken Grasslands

WETLAND	**Forested Wetland**
	• Black Spruce
	• Bottomland Hardwood
	• Ephemeral Pond
	• Forested Seep
	• Swamp Hardwood
	• Tamarack
	• White Cedar
		Shrub Wetland
		• Wetland Shrub – Alder
		• Wetland Shrub – Dogwood
				Open Wetland/Marsh
				• Calcareous Fen
				• Emergent Wetland
				• Fen
				• Muskeg & Open Bog
				• Remnant Prairie
				  ○ Wet
				  ○ Wet-mesic
				• Sedge Meadow
				• Shallow Lake/ Deep Marsh

OTHER			**Great Lakes** • Alvar • Great Lakes Beach • Great Lakes Alkaline Rockshore • Great Lakes Dune • Great Lakes Interdunal Wetland • Great Lakes Ridges and Swales	**Developed** • Campground • Parking area • Right-of-way • Recreational • Trails (motorized & non-motorized)

WATER				**Open Water**
				• Flowages & Impoundments
				• Lakes
				• Streams
				  ○ Coldwater Streams
				  ○ Warmwater Rivers & Streams